

· THE MERMAID ·
· AND OTHER STORIES ·

From Hans Christian Andersen
Illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker



CHRISTMAS IS
A HAPPY TIME!



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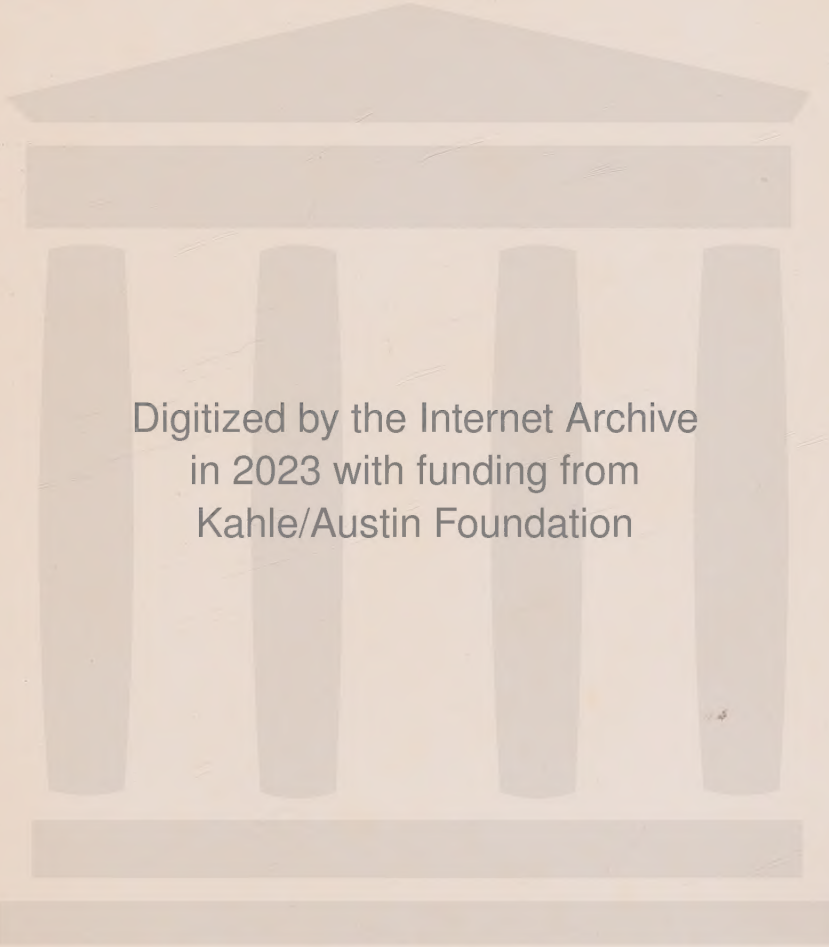


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**THE MERMAID
AND OTHER STORIES**



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She would have nothing besides the rosy flowers like the sun up above,
except a statue of a beautiful boy

THE
MERMAID
AND OTHER STORIES
from Hans Christian Andersen

FAIRY
RING

SERIES



Illustrated by Dugald Stewart Walker

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List of Illustrations

Coloured

She would have nothing besides the rosy flowers like the sun up above, except a statue of a beautiful boy.

She stood all day on the roof waiting for him; she is waiting for him still, but he wanders around the world telling stories.

Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven and no one there asked about the red shoes.

Tears of sorrow shed by a mother for her child will always reach it; but they do not bring healing, they burn and make the torment fifty times worse.

“Little nightingale!” called the kitchen maid quite loud, “our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him!”

Black and White

She held his head above the water and let the waves drive them whithersoever they would.

Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale as she was.

And he told her about the storks, which bring beautiful children up out of the river.

“I saw the prophet myself . . . his eyes were like shining stars, and his beard like foaming water.”

She wanted to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter wormwood grew.

“You can't know who I am? I chop the bad people's heads off, and I see that my axe is quivering.”

“Heavens, how beautiful it is!” he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot it.



FAR out at sea the water is as blue as the bluest cornflower and as clear as the clearest crystal; but it is very deep, too deep for any cable to fathom, and if many steeples were piled on the top of one another they would not reach from the bed of the sea to the surface of the water. It is down there that the Mermen live.

Now don't imagine that there are only bare white sands at the bottom; oh, no! the most wonderful trees and plants grow there, with such flexible stalks and leaves that at the slightest motion of the water they move just as if they were alive. All the fish, big and little, glide among the branches just as, up here, birds glide through air. The palace of the Merman King lies in the very deepest part; its walls are of coral and the long pointed windows of the clearest amber, but the roof is made of mussel shells which open and shut with the lapping of the water. This has a lovely effect, for there are gleaming pearls in every shell, any one of which would be the pride of a queen's crown.

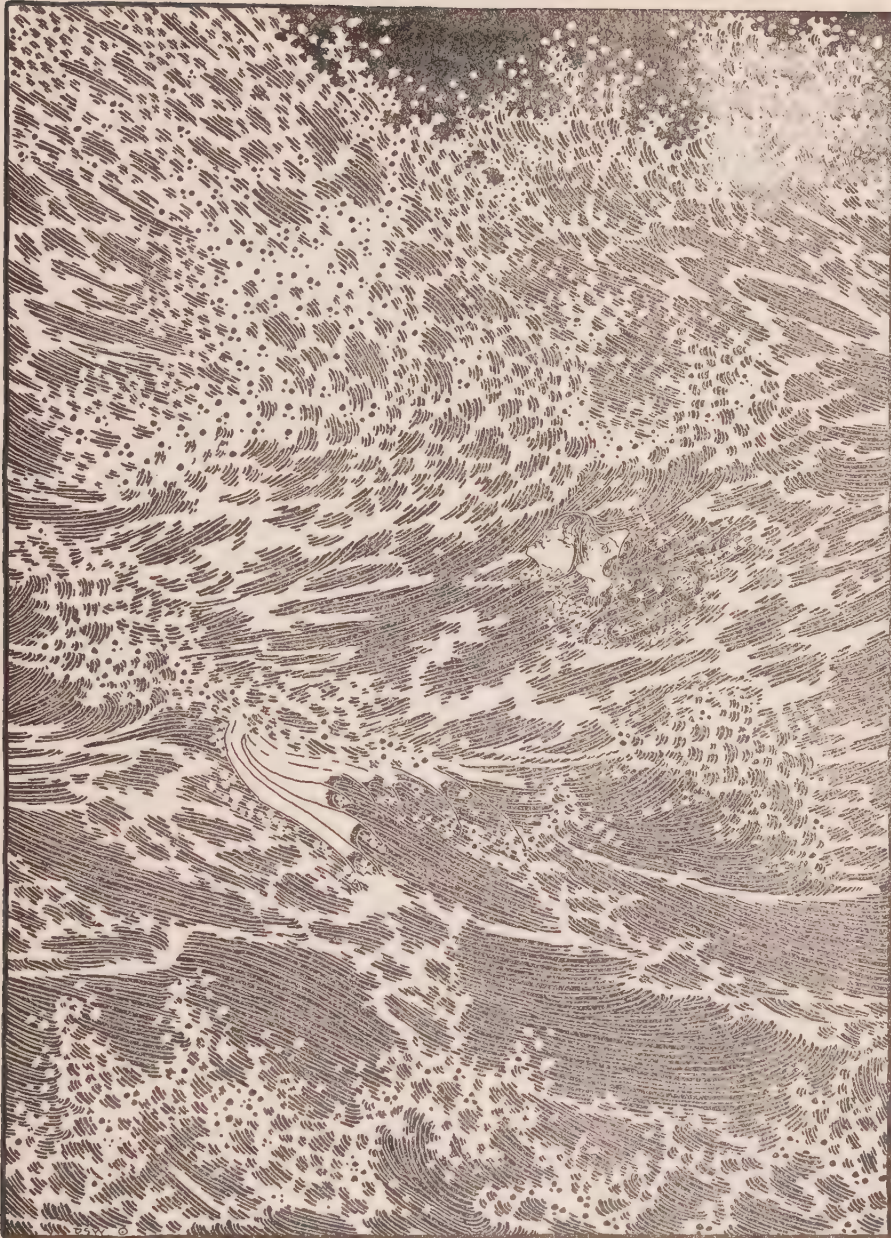
ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

The Merman King had been for many years a widower, but his old mother kept house for him; she was a clever woman, but so proud of her noble birth that she wore twelve oysters on her tail, while the other grandees were only allowed six. Otherwise she was worthy of all praise, especially because she was so fond of the little mermaid princesses, her grandchildren. They were six beautiful children, but the youngest was the prettiest of all, her skin was as soft and delicate as a roseleaf, her eyes as blue as the deepest sea, but like all the others she had no feet, and instead of legs she had a fish's tail.

All the livelong day they used to play in the palace in the great halls, where living flowers grew out of the walls. When the great amber windows were thrown open the fish swam in, just as the swallows fly into our rooms when we open the windows, but the fish swam right up to the little princesses, ate out of their hands, and allowed themselves to be patted.

Outside the palace was a large garden, with fiery red and deep blue trees, the fruit of which shone like gold, while the flowers glowed like fire on their ceaselessly waving stalks. The ground was of the finest sand, but it was of a blue phosphorescent tint. Everything was bathed in a wondrous blue light down there; you might more readily have supposed yourself to be high up in the air, with only the sky above and below you, than that you were at the bottom of the ocean. In a dead calm you could just catch a glimpse of the sun like a purple flower with a stream of light radiating from its calyx.

Each little princess had her own little plot of garden, where she could dig and plant just as she liked. One made her flower-bed in the shape of a whale, another thought it nice to have hers like a little mermaid; but the youngest made hers quite round like the sun, and she would only have flowers of a rosy hue like its beams. She was a curious child, quiet and thoughtful, and while the other sisters decked out their gardens with all kinds of extraordinary objects which



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they got from wrecks, she would have nothing besides the rosy flowers like the sun up above, except a statue of a beautiful boy. It was hewn out of the purest white marble and had gone to the bottom from some wreck. By the statue she planted a rosy red weeping willow which grew splendidly, and the fresh delicate branches hung round and over it, till they almost touched the blue sand where the shadows showed violet, and were ever moving like the branches. It looked as if the leaves and the roots were playfully interchanging kisses.

Nothing gave her greater pleasure than to hear about the world of human beings up above; she made her old grandmother tell her all that she knew about ships and towns, people and animals. But above all it seemed strangely beautiful to her that up on the earth the flowers were scented, for they were not so at the bottom of the sea; also that the woods were green, and that the fish which were to be seen among the branches could sing so loudly and sweetly that it was a delight to listen to them. You see the grandmother called little birds fish, or the mermaids would not have understood her, as they had never seen a bird.

“When you are fifteen,” said the grandmother, “you will be allowed to rise up from the sea and sit on the rocks in the moonlight, and look at the big ships sailing by, and you will also see woods and towns.”

One of the sisters would be fifteen in the following year, but the others — well, they were each one year younger than the other, so that the youngest had five whole years to wait before she would be allowed to come up from the bottom, to see what things were like on earth. But each one promised the others to give a full account of all that she had seen and found most wonderful on the first day. Their grandmother could never tell them enough, for there were so many things about which they wanted information.

None of them was so full of longings as the youngest, the very one who had the longest time to wait, and who was so

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quiet and dreamy. Many a night she stood by the open windows and looked up through the dark blue water which the fish were lashing with their tails and fins. She could see the moon and the stars, it is true; their light was pale, but they looked much bigger through the water than they do to our eyes. When she saw a dark shadow glide between her and them, she knew that it was either a whale swimming above her, or else a ship laden with human beings. I am certain they never dreamt that a lovely little mermaid was standing down below, stretching up her white hands toward the keel.

The eldest princess had now reached her fifteenth birthday, and was to venture above the water. When she came back she had hundreds of things to tell them, but the most delightful of all, she said, was to lie in the moonlight, on a sandbank in a calm sea, and to gaze at the large town close to the shore, where the lights twinkled like hundreds of stars; to listen to music and the noise and bustle of carriages and people, to see the many church towers and spires, and to hear the bells ringing; and just because she could not go on shore she longed for that most of all.

Oh! how eagerly the youngest sister listened, and when, later in the evening she stood at the open window and looked up through the dark blue water, she thought of the big town with all its noise and bustle, and fancied that she could even hear the church bells ringing.

The year after, the second sister was allowed to mount up through the water and swim about wherever she liked. The sun was just going down when she reached the surface, the most beautiful sight, she thought, that she had ever seen. The whole sky had looked like gold, she said, and as for the clouds! well, their beauty was beyond description, they floated in red and violet splendour over her head, and, far faster than they went, a flock of wild swans flew like a long white veil over the water toward the setting sun; she swam toward it, but it sank and all the rosy light on clouds and water faded away.

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The year after that the third sister went up, and being much the most venturesome of them all, swam up a broad river which ran into the sea. She saw beautiful green, vine-clad hills; palaces and country seats peeping through splendid woods. She heard the birds singing, and the sun was so hot that she was often obliged to dive, to cool her burning face. In a tiny bay she found a troop of little children running about naked and paddling in the water; she wanted to play with them, but they were frightened and ran away. Then a little black animal came up; it was a dog, but she had never seen one before; it barked so furiously at her that she was frightened and made for the open sea. She could never forget the beautiful woods, the green hills, and the lovely children who could swim in the water although they had no fishes' tails.

The fourth sister was not so brave; she stayed in the remotest part of the ocean, and, according to her account, that was the most beautiful spot. You could see for miles and miles around you, and the sky above was like a great glass dome. She had seen ships, but only far away, so that they looked like sea-gulls. There were grotesque dolphins turning somersaults, and gigantic whales squirting water through their nostrils like hundreds of fountains on every side.

Now the fifth sister's turn came. Her birthday fell in the winter, so that she saw sights that the others had not seen on their first trips. The sea looked quite green, and large icebergs were floating about, each one of which looked like a pearl, she said, but was much bigger than the church towers built by men. They took the most wonderful shapes, and sparkled like diamonds. She had seated herself on one of the largest, and all the passing ships sheered off in alarm when they saw her sitting there with her long hair streaming loose in the wind.

In the evening the sky became overcast with dark clouds; it thundered, and lightened, and the huge icebergs, glittering in the bright lightning, were lifted high into the air by the

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black waves. All the ships shortened sail, and there was fear and trembling on every side, but she sat quietly on her floating iceberg watching the blue lightning flash in zigzags down on to the shining sea.

The first time any of the sisters rose above the water she was delighted by the novelties and beauties she saw; but once grown up, and at liberty to go where she liked, she became indifferent and longed for her home; in the course of a month or so they all said that after all their own home in the deep was best, it was so cozy there.

Many an evening the five sisters interlacing their arms would rise above the water together. They had lovely voices, much clearer than any mortal, and when a storm was rising, and they expected ships to be wrecked, they would sing in the most seductive strains of the wonders of the deep, bidding the seafarers have no fear of them. But the sailors could not understand the words, they thought it was the voice of the storm; nor could it be theirs to see this Elysium of the deep, for when the ship sank they were drowned, and only reached the Merman's palace in death. When the elder sisters rose up in this manner, arm-in-arm, in the evening, the youngest remained behind quite alone, looking after them as if she must weep, but mermaids have no tears and so they suffer all the more.

"Oh! if I were only fifteen!" she said, "I know how fond I shall be of the world above, and of the mortals who dwell there."

At last her fifteenth birthday came.

"Now we shall have you off our hands," said her grandmother, the old queen dowager. "Come now, let me adorn you like your other sisters!" and she put a wreath of white lilies round her hair, but every petal of the flowers was half a pearl; then the old queen had eight oysters fixed on to the princess's tail to show her high rank.

"But it hurts so!" said the little mermaid.

"You must endure the pain for the sake of the finery!" said her grandmother.

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But oh! how gladly would she have shaken off all this splendour, and laid aside the heavy wreath. Her red flowers in her garden suited her much better, but she did not dare to make any alteration. "Good-bye," she said, and mounted as lightly and airily as a bubble through the water.

The sun had just set when her head rose above the water, but the clouds were still lighted up with a rosy and golden splendour, and the evening star sparkled in the soft pink sky, the air was mild and fresh, and the sea as calm as a millpond. A big three-masted ship lay close by with only a single sail set, for there was not a breath of wind, and the sailors were sitting about the rigging, on the cross-trees, and at the mast-heads. There was music and singing on board, and as the evening closed in, hundreds of gaily coloured lanterns were lighted—they looked like the flags of all nations waving in the air. The little mermaid swam right up to the cabin windows, and every time she was lifted by the swell she could see through the transparent panes crowds of gaily dressed people. The handsomest of them all was the young prince with large dark eyes; he could not be much more than sixteen, and all these festivities were in honour of his birthday. The sailors danced on deck, and when the prince appeared among them hundreds of rockets were let off, making it as light as day, and frightening the little mermaid so much that she had to dive under the water. She soon ventured up again, and it was just as if all the stars of heaven were falling in showers round about her. She had never seen such magic fires. Great suns whirled round, gorgeous fire-fish hung in the blue air, and all was reflected in the calm and glassy sea. It was so light on board the ship that every little rope could be seen, and the people still better. Oh! how handsome the prince was, how he laughed and smiled as he greeted his guests, while the music rang out in the quiet night.

It got quite late, but the little mermaid could not take her eyes off the ship and the beautiful prince. The coloured

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lanterns were put out, no more rockets were sent up, and the cannon had ceased its thunder, but deep down in the sea there was a dull murmuring and moaning sound. Meanwhile she was rocked up and down on the waves, so that she could look into the cabin; but the ship got more and more way on, sail after sail was filled by the wind, the waves grew stronger, great clouds gathered, and it lightened in the distance. Oh, there was going to be a fearful storm! and soon the sailors had to shorten sail. The great ship rocked and rolled as she dashed over the angry sea, the black waves rose like mountains, high enough to overwhelm her, but she dived like a swan through them and rose again and again on their towering crests. The little mermaid thought it a most amusing race, but not so the sailors. The ship creaked and groaned, the mighty timbers bulged and bent under the heavy blows, the water broke over the decks, snapping the mainmast like a reed, she heeled over on her side, and the water rushed into the hold.

Now the little mermaid saw that they were in danger and she had for her own sake to beware of the floating beams and wreckage. One moment it was so pitch dark that she could not see at all, but when the lightning flashed it became so light that she could see all on board. Every man was looking out for his own safety as best he could, but she more particularly followed the young prince with her eyes, and when the ship went down she saw him sink in the deep sea. At first she was quite delighted, for now he was coming to be with her, but then she remembered that human beings could not live under water, and that only if he were dead could he go to her father's palace. No! he must not die; so she swam toward him all among the drifting beams and planks, quite forgetting that they might crush her. She dived deep down under the water, and came up again through the waves, and at last reached the young prince just as he was becoming unable to swim any further in the stormy sea. His limbs were numbed, his beautiful eyes were closing, and he must have died if the

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little mermaid had not come to the rescue. She held his head above the water and let the waves drive them whithersoever they would.

By daybreak all the storm was over; of the ship not a trace was to be seen; the sun rose from the water in radiant brilliance and his rosy beams seemed to cast a glow of life into the prince's cheeks, but his eyes remained closed. The mermaid kissed his fair and lofty brow, and stroked back the dripping hair; it seemed to her that he was like the marble statue in her little garden; she kissed him again and longed that he might live.

At last she saw dry land before her, high blue mountains on whose summits the white snow glistened as if a flock of swans had settled there; down by the shore were beautiful green woods, and in the foreground a church or temple, she did not quite know which, but it was a building of some sort. Lemon and orange trees grew in the garden and lofty palms stood by the gate. At this point the sea formed a little bay where the water was quite calm, but very deep, right up to the cliffs; at their foot was a strip of fine white sand, to which she swam with the beautiful prince, and laid him down on it, taking great care that his head should rest high up in the warm sunshine.

The bells now began to ring in the great white building and a number of young maidens came into the garden. Then the little mermaid swam farther off behind some high rocks and covered her hair and breast with foam, so that no one should see her little face, and then she watched to see who would discover the poor prince.

It was not long before one of the maidens came up to him; at first she seemed quite frightened, but only for a moment, and then she fetched several others, and the mermaid saw that the prince was coming to life, and that he smiled at all those around him, but he never smiled at her—you see he did not know that she had saved him. She felt so sad that when he was led away into the great building she dived sorrow-

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fully into the water and made her way home to her father's palace.

Always silent and thoughtful, she became more so now than ever. Her sisters often asked her what she had seen on her first visit to the surface, but she never would tell them anything.

Many an evening and many a morning she would rise to the place where she had left the prince. She saw the fruit in the garden ripen, and then gathered; she saw the snow melt on the mountain-tops, but she never saw the prince, so she always went home still sadder than before. At home her only consolation was to sit in her little garden with her arms twined round the handsome marble statue which reminded her of the prince. It was all in gloomy shade now, as she had ceased to tend her flowers and the garden had become a neglected wilderness of long stalks and leaves entangled with the branches of the tree.

At last she could not bear it any longer, so she told one of her sisters, and from her it soon spread to the others, but to no one else except to one or two other mermaids who only told their dearest friends. One of these knew all about the prince; she had also seen the festivities on the ship; she knew where he came from and where his kingdom was situated.

"Come, little sister!" said the other princesses, and, throwing their arms round each other's shoulders, they rose from the water in a long line, just in front of the prince's palace.

It was built of light yellow glistening stone, with great marble staircases, one of which led into the garden. Magnificent gilded cupolas rose above the roof, and the spaces between the columns which encircled the building were filled with lifelike marble statues. Through the clear glass of the lofty windows you could see gorgeous halls adorned with costly silken hangings, and the pictures on the walls were a sight worth seeing. In the midst of the central hall a large fountain played, throwing its jets of spray upward to a glass dome in

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the roof, through which the sunbeams lighted up the water and the beautiful plants which grew in the great basin.

She knew now where he lived and often used to go there in the evenings and by night over the water; she swam much nearer the land than any of the others dared; she even ventured right up the narrow channel under the splendid marble terrace, which threw a long shadow over the water. She used to sit here looking at the young prince, who thought he was quite alone in the clear moonlight.

She saw him many an evening sailing about in his beautiful boat, with flags waving and music playing; she used to peep through the green rushes, and if the wind happened to catch her long silvery veil and any one saw it, they only thought it was a swan flapping its wings.

Many a night she heard the fishermen, who were fishing by torchlight, talking over the good deeds of the young prince; and she was happy to think that she had saved his life when he was drifting about on the waves, half dead, and she could not forget how closely his head had pressed her breast, and how passionately she had kissed him; but he knew nothing of all this, and never saw her even in his dreams.

She became fonder and fonder of mankind, and longed more and more to be able to live among them; their world seemed so infinitely bigger than hers; with their ships they could scour the ocean, they could ascend the mountains high above the clouds, and their wooded, grass-grown lands extended farther than her eye could reach. There was so much that she wanted to know, but her sisters could not give an answer to all her questions, so she asked her old grandmother, who knew the upper world well, and rightly called it the country above the sea.

"If men are not drowned," asked the little mermaid, "do they live forever? Do they not die as we do down here in the sea?"

"Yes," said the old lady, "they have to die too, and

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their lifetime is even shorter than ours. We may live here for three hundred years, but when we cease to exist, we become mere foam on the water and do not have so much as a grave among our dear ones. We have no immortal souls, we have no future life, we are just like the green sea-weed, which, once cut down, can never revive again! Men, on the other hand, have a soul which lives forever, lives after the body has become dust; it rises through the clear air, up to the shining stars! Just as we rise from the water to see the land of mortals, so they rise up to unknown beautiful regions which we shall never see."

"Why have we no immortal souls?" asked the little mermaid sadly. "I would give all my three hundred years to be a human being for one day, and afterward to have a share in the heavenly kingdom."

"You must not be thinking about that," said the grandmother; "we are much better off and happier than human beings."

"Then I shall have to die and to float as foam on the water, and never hear the music of the waves or see the beautiful flowers or the red sun! Is there nothing I can do to gain an immortal soul?"

"No," said the grandmother, "only if a human being so loved you, that you were more to him than father or mother, if all his thoughts and all his love were so centred in you that he would let the priest join your hands and would vow to be faithful to you here, and to all eternity, then your body would become infused with his soul. Thus and only thus could you gain a share in the felicity of mankind. He would give you a soul while yet keeping his own. But that can never happen! That which is your greatest beauty in the sea, your fish's tail, is thought hideous up on earth, so little do they understand about it; to be pretty there you must have two clumsy supports which they call legs!"

Then the little mermaid sighed and looked sadly at her fish's tail.

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"Let us be happy," said the grandmother; "we will hop and skip during our three hundred years of life—it is surely a long enough time—and after it is over we shall rest all the better in our graves. There is to be a court ball to-night."

This was a much more splendid affair than we ever see on earth. The walls and the ceiling of the great ballroom were of thick but transparent glass. Several hundreds of colossal mussel shells, rose-red and grass-green, were ranged in order round the sides, holding blue lights, which illuminated the whole room and shone through the walls, so that the sea outside was quite lit up. You could see countless fish, great and small, swimming toward the glass walls, some with shining scales of crimson hue, while others were golden and silvery. In the middle of the room was a broad stream of running water and on this the mermaids and mermen danced to their own beautiful singing. No earthly beings have such lovely voices. The little mermaid sang more sweetly than any of them and they all applauded her. For a moment she felt glad at heart, for she knew that she had the finest voice either in the sea or on land. But she soon began to think again about the upper world; she could not forget the handsome prince and her sorrow in not possessing, like him, an immortal soul. Therefore she stole out of her father's palace, and while all within was joy and merriment, she sat sadly in her little garden. Suddenly she heard the sound of a horn through the water, and she thought, "now he is out sailing up there; he whom I love more than father or mother, he to whom my thoughts cling and to whose hands I am ready to commit the happiness of my life. I will dare anything to win him and to gain an immortal soul! While my sisters are dancing in my father's palace, I will go to the sea witch of whom I have always been very much afraid; she will perhaps be able to advise and help me!"

Thereupon the little mermaid left the garden and went toward the roaring whirlpools at the back of which the witch

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lived. She had never been that way before; no flowers grew there, no seaweed, only the bare gray sands, stretched toward the whirlpools, which like rushing millwheels swirled round, dragging everything that came within reach down to the depths. She had to pass between these boiling eddies to reach the witches' domain, and for a long way the only path led over warm bubbling mud, which the witch called her "peat bog." Her house stood behind this in the midst of a weird forest. All the trees and bushes were polyps, half animal and half plant; they looked like hundred-headed snakes growing out of the sand, the branches were long slimy arms, with tentacles like wriggling worms, every joint of which from the root to the outermost tip was in constant motion. They wound themselves tightly round whatever they could lay hold of and never let it escape. The little mermaid standing outside was quite frightened, her heart beat fast with terror and she nearly turned back, but then she remembered the prince and the immortal soul of mankind and took courage. She bound her long flowing hair tightly round her head, so that the polyps should not seize her by it, folded her hands over her breast, and darted like a fish through the water, in between the hideous polyps which stretched out their sensitive arms and tentacles toward her. She could see that every one of them had something or other, which they had grasped with their hundred arms, and which they held as if in iron bands. The bleached bones of men who had perished at sea and sunk below peeped forth from the arms of some, while others clutched rudders and sea chests, or the skeleton of some land animal, and, most horrible of all, a little mermaid whom they had caught and suffocated. Then she came to a large opening in the wood where the ground was all slimy, and where some huge fat watersnakes were gambolling about. In the middle of this opening was a house built of the bones of the wrecked; there sat the witch, letting a toad eat out of her mouth, just as mortals let a little canary eat sugar. She called the hideous water-

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snakes her little chickens, and allowed them to crawl about on her unsightly bosom.

"I know very well what you have come here for," said the witch. "It is very foolish of you! all the same you shall have your way, because it will lead you into misfortune, my fine princess. You want to get rid of your fish's tail, and instead to have two stumps to walk about upon like human beings, so that the young prince may fall in love with you, and that you may win him and an immortal soul." Saying this, she gave such a loud hideous laugh that the toad and the snakes fell to the ground and wriggled about there.

"You are just in the nick of time," said the witch; "after sunrise to-morrow I should not be able to help you until another year had run its course. I will make you a potion, and before sunrise you must swim ashore with it, seat yourself on the beach and drink it; then your tail will divide and shrivel up to what men call beautiful legs, but it hurts, it is as if a sharp sword were running through you. All who see you will say that you are the most beautiful child of man they have ever seen. You will keep your gliding gait, no dancer will rival you, but every step you take will be as if you were treading upon sharp knives, so sharp as to draw blood. If you are willing to suffer all this I am ready to help you!"

"Yes!" said the little princess with a trembling voice, thinking of the prince and of winning an undying soul.

"But remember," said the witch, "when once you have received a human form, you can never be a mermaid again; you will never again be able to dive down through the water to your sisters and to your father's palace. And if you do not succeed in winning the prince's love, so that for your sake he will forget father and mother, cleave to you with his whole heart, let the priest join your hands and make you man and wife, you will gain no immortal soul! The first morning after his marriage with another your heart will break, and you will turn into foam of the sea."

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"I will do it," said the little mermaid as pale as death.

"But you will have to pay me, too," said the witch, "and it is no trifle that I demand. You have the most beautiful voice of any at the bottom of the sea, and I daresay that you think you will fascinate him with it, but you must give me that voice. I will have the best you possess in return for my precious potion! I have to mingle my own blood with it so as to make it as sharp as a two-edged sword."

"But if you take my voice," said the little mermaid, "what have I left?"

"Your beautiful form," said the witch, "your gliding gait, and your speaking eyes; with these you ought surely to be able to bewitch a human heart. Well! have you lost courage? Put out your little tongue and I will cut it off in payment for the powerful draught."

"Let it be done," said the little mermaid, and the witch put on her cauldron to brew the magic potion. "There is nothing like cleanliness," said she, as she scoured the pot with a bundle of snakes; then she punctured her breast and let the black blood drop into the cauldron, and the steam took the most weird shapes, enough to frighten any one. Every moment the witch threw new ingredients into the pot, and when it boiled the bubbling was like the sound of crocodiles weeping. At last the potion was ready and it looked like the clearest water.

"There it is," said the witch, and thereupon she cut off the tongue of the little mermaid, who was dumb now and could neither sing nor speak.

"If the polyps should seize you, when you go back through my wood," said the witch, "just drop a single drop of this liquid on them, and their arms and fingers will burst into a thousand pieces." But the little mermaid had no need to do this, for at the mere sight of the bright liquid which sparkled in her hand like a shining star, they drew back in terror. So she soon got past the wood, the bog, and the eddying whirlpools.



Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale
as she was

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She saw her father's palace, the lights were all out in the great ballroom, and no doubt all the household was asleep, but she did not dare to go in now that she was dumb and about to leave her home forever. She felt as if her heart would break with grief. She stole into the garden and plucked a flower from each of her sister's plots, wafted with her hand countless kisses toward the palace, and then rose up through the dark blue water.

The sun had not risen when she came in sight of the prince's palace and landed at the beautiful marble steps. The moon was shining bright and clear. The little mermaid drank the burning, stinging draught, and it was like a sharp two-edged sword running through her tender frame; she fainted away and lay as if she were dead. When the sun rose on the sea she woke up and became conscious of a sharp pang, but just in front of her stood the handsome young prince, fixing his coal-black eyes on her; she cast hers down and saw that her fish's tail was gone, and that she had the prettiest little white legs any maiden could desire, but she was quite naked, so she wrapped her long thick hair around her. The prince asked who she was and how she came there; she looked at him tenderly and with a sad expression in her dark-blue eyes, but could not speak. Then he took her by the hand and led her into the palace. Every step she took was, as the witch had warned her beforehand, as if she were treading on sharp knives and spikes, but she bore it gladly; led by the prince she moved as lightly as a bubble, and he and every one else marvelled at her graceful gliding gait.

Clothed in the costliest silks and muslins, she was the greatest beauty in the palace, but she was dumb and could neither sing nor speak. Beautiful slaves clad in silks and gold came forward and sang to the prince and his royal parents; one of them sang better than all the others, and the prince clapped his hands and smiled at her; that made the little mermaid very sad, for she knew that she used to sing far better

ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

herself. She thought "Oh! if he only knew that for the sake of being with him I had given up my voice forever!" Now the slaves began to dance graceful undulating dances to enchanting music; thereupon the little mermaid, lifting her beautiful white arms and raising herself on tiptoe, glided on the floor with a grace which none of the other dancers had yet attained. With every motion her grace and beauty became more apparent, and her eyes appealed more deeply to the heart than the songs of the slaves. Every one was delighted with it, especially the prince, who called her his little foundling, and she danced on and on, notwithstanding that every time her foot touched the ground it was like treading on sharp knives. The prince said that she should always be near him, and she was allowed to sleep outside his door on a velvet cushion.

He had a man's dress made for her, so that she could ride about with him. They used to ride through scented woods, where the green branches brushed her shoulders, and little birds sang among the fresh leaves. She climbed up the highest mountains with the prince, and although her delicate feet bled so that others saw it, she only laughed and followed him until they saw the clouds sailing below them like a flock of birds, taking flight to distant lands.

At home in the prince's palace, when at night the others were asleep, she used to go out on to the marble steps; it cooled her burning feet to stand in the cold sea water, and at such times she used to think of those she had left in the deep.

One night her sisters came arm in arm; they sang so sorrowfully as they swam on the water that she beckoned to them and they recognized her, and told her how she had grieved them all. After that they visited her every night, and one night she saw, a long way out, her old grandmother (who for many years had not been above the water), and the Merman King with his crown on his head; they stretched out their hands toward her, but did not venture so close to land as her sisters.

THE MERMAID

Day by day she became dearer to the prince; he loved her as one loves a good, sweet child, but it never entered his head to make her his queen; yet, unless she became his wife she would never win an everlasting soul, but on his wedding morning would turn to sea foam.

"Am I not dearer to you than any of them?" the little mermaid's eyes seemed to say when he took her in his arms and kissed her beautiful brow.

"Yes, you are the dearest one to me," said the prince, "for you have the best heart of them all, and you are fondest of me; you are also like a young girl I once saw, but whom I never expect to see again. I was on board a ship which was wrecked; I was driven on shore by the waves close to a holy Temple where several young girls were ministering at a service; the youngest of them found me on the beach and saved my life; I saw her but twice. She was the only person I could love in this world, but you are like her, you almost drive her image out of my heart. She belongs to the holy Temple, and therefore by good fortune you have been sent to me; we will never part!"

"Alas! he does not know that it was I who saved his life," thought the little mermaid. "I bore him over the sea to the wood, where the Temple stands. I sat behind the foam and watched to see if any one would come. I saw the pretty girl he loves better than me." And the mermaid heaved a bitter sigh, for she could not weep.

"The girl belongs to the holy Temple, he has said; she will never return to the world; they will never meet again; I am here with him; I see him every day. Yes! I will tend him, love him, and give up my life to him."

But now the rumour ran that the prince was to be married to the beautiful daughter of a neighbouring king, and for that reason was fitting out a splendid ship. It was given out that the prince was going on a voyage to see the adjoining countries, but it was without doubt to see the king's daughter; he was to have a great suite with him, but the little mermaid

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shook her head and laughed; she knew the prince's intentions much better than any of the others. "I must take this voyage," he had said to her; "I must go and see the beautiful princess; my parents demand that, but they will never force me to bring her home as my bride; I can never love her! She will not be like the lovely girl in the Temple whom you resemble. If ever I had to choose a bride it would sooner be you with your speaking eyes, my sweet, dumb foundling!" And he kissed her rosy mouth, played with her long hair, and laid his head upon her heart, which already dreamt of human joys and an immortal soul.

"You are not frightened of the sea, I suppose, my dumb child?" he said, as they stood on the proud ship which was to carry them to the country of the neighbouring king; and he told her about storms and calms, about curious fish in the deep, and the marvels seen by divers; and she smiled at his tales, for she knew all about the bottom of the sea much better than any one else.

At night, in the moonlight, when all were asleep, except the steersman who stood at the helm, she sat at the side of the ship trying to pierce the clear water with her eyes, and fancied she saw her father's palace, and above it her old grandmother with her silver crown on her head, looking up through the cross currents toward the keel of the ship. Then her sisters rose above the water; they gazed sadly at her, wringing their white hands; she beckoned to them, smiled, and was about to tell them that all was going well and happily with her, when the cabin boy approached, and the sisters dived down, but he supposed that the white objects he had seen were nothing but flakes of foam.

The next morning the ship entered the harbour of the neighbouring king's magnificent city. The church bells rang and trumpets were sounded from every lofty tower, while the soldiers paraded with flags flying and glittering bayonets. There was a *fête* every day; there was a succession of balls,

THE MERMAID

and receptions followed one after the other, but the princess was not yet present; she was being brought up a long way off, in a holy Temple they said, and was learning all the royal virtues. At last she came. The little mermaid stood eager to see her beauty, and she was obliged to confess that a lovelier creature she had never beheld. Her complexion was exquisitely pure and delicate, and her trustful eyes of the deepest blue shone through their dark lashes.

"It is you," said the prince, "you who saved me when I lay almost lifeless on the beach?" and he clasped his blushing bride to his heart. "Oh, I am too happy!" he exclaimed to the little mermaid.

"A greater joy than I had dared to hope for has come to pass. You will rejoice at my joy, for you love me better than any one." Then the little mermaid kissed his hand, and felt as if her heart were broken already.

His wedding morn would bring death to her and change her to foam.

All the church bells pealed and heralds rode through the town proclaiming the nuptials. Upon every altar throughout the land fragrant oil was burnt in costly silver lamps. Amidst the swinging of censers by the priests, the bride and bridegroom joined hands and received the bishop's blessing. The little mermaid dressed in silk and gold stood holding the bride's train, but her ears were deaf to the festal strains, her eyes saw nothing of the sacred ceremony, she was thinking of her coming death and of all that she had lost in this world.

That same evening the bride and bridegroom embarked, amidst the roar of cannon and the waving of banners. A royal tent of purple and gold softly cushioned was raised amidships, where the bridal pair were to repose during the calm cool night.

The sails swelled in the wind and the ship skimmed lightly and almost without motion over the transparent sea.

At dusk lanterns of many colours were lighted and the sailors danced merrily on deck. The little mermaid could

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not help thinking of the first time she came up from the sea and saw the same splendour and gaiety; and she now threw herself among the dancers, whirling, as a swallow skims through the air when pursued. The onlookers cheered her in amazement; never had she danced so divinely; her delicate feet pained her as if they were cut with knives, but she did not feel it, for the pain at her heart was much sharper. She knew that it was the last night that she would breathe the same air as he, and would look upon the mighty deep, and the blue starry heavens; an endless night without thought and without dreams awaited her, who neither had a soul, nor could win one. The joy and revelry on board lasted till long past midnight; she went on laughing and dancing with the thought of death all the time in her heart. The prince caressed his lovely bride and she played with his raven locks, and with their arms entwined they retired to the gorgeous tent. All became hushed and still on board the ship, only the steersman stood at the helm, the little mermaid laid her white arms on the gunwale and looked eastward for the pink-tinted dawn; the first sunbeam, she knew, would be her death. Then she saw her sisters rise from the water, they were as pale as she was, their beautiful long hair no longer floated on the breeze, for it had been cut off.

"We have given it to the witch to obtain her help, so that you may not die to-night! she has given us a knife, here it is, look how sharp it is! Before the sun rises, you must plunge it into the prince's heart, and when his warm blood sprinkles your feet they will join together and grow into a tail, and you will once more be a mermaid; you will be able to come down into the water to us, and to live out your three hundred years before you are turned into dead, salt sea foam. Make haste! you or he must die before sunrise! Our old grandmother is so full of grief that her white hair has fallen off as ours fell under the witch's scissors. Slay the prince and come back to us! Quick! Quick! do you not see the rosy streak in the sky? In a few moments the sun will rise and then you

THE MERMAID

must die!" saying this they heaved a wondrous deep sigh and sank among the waves.

The little mermaid drew aside the purple curtain from the tent and looked at the beautiful bride asleep with her head on the prince's breast; she bent over him and kissed his fair brow, looked at the sky where the dawn was spreading fast; looked at the sharp knife, and again fixed her eyes on the prince who, in his dream, called his bride by name, yes! she alone was in his thoughts! — For a moment the knife quivered in her grasp, then she threw it far out among the waves now rosy in the morning light, and where it fell the water bubbled up like drops of blood.

Once more she looked at the prince, with her eyes already dimmed by death, then dashed overboard and fell, her body dissolving into foam.

Now the sun rose from the sea and with its kindly beams warmed the deadly cold foam, so that the little mermaid did not feel the chill of death. She saw the bright sun and above her floated hundreds of beauteous ethereal beings through which she could see the white ship and the rosy heavens; their voices were melodious but so spirit-like that no human ear could hear them, any more than an earthly eye could see their forms. Light as bubbles they floated through the air without the aid of wings. The little mermaid perceived that she had a form like theirs; it gradually took shape out of the foam. "To whom am I coming?" said she, and her voice sounded like that of the other beings, so unearthly in its beauty that no music of ours could reproduce it.

"To the daughters of the air!" answered the others; "a mermaid has no undying soul, and can never gain one without winning the love of a human being. Her eternal life must depend upon an unknown power. Nor have the daughters of the air an everlasting soul, but by their own good deeds they may create one for themselves. We fly to the tropics where mankind is the victim of hot and pestilent winds, there

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we bring cooling breezes. We diffuse the scent of flowers all around, and bring refreshment and healing in our train. When for three hundred years we have laboured to do all the good in our power, we gain an undying soul and take a part in the everlasting joys of mankind. You, poor little mermaid, have with your whole heart struggled for the same thing as we have struggled for. You have suffered and endured, raised yourself to the spirit world of the air; and now by your own good deeds you may, in the course of three hundred years, work out for yourself an undying soul."

Then the little mermaid lifted her transparent arms toward God's sun, and for the first time shed tears.

On board ship all was again life and bustle; she saw the prince with his lovely bride searching for her; they looked sadly at the bubbling foam, as if they knew that she had thrown herself into the waves. Unseen she kissed the bride on her brow, smiled at the prince and rose aloft with the other spirits of the air to the rosy clouds which sailed above.

"In three hundred years we shall thus float into Paradise."

"We might reach it sooner," whispered one. "Unseen we flit into those homes of men where there are children, and for every day that we find a good child who gives pleasure to its parents and deserves their love, God shortens our time of probation. The child does not know when we fly through the room, and when we smile with pleasure at it one year of our three hundred is taken away. But if we see a naughty or badly disposed child, we cannot help shedding tears of sorrow, and every tear adds a day to the time of our probation."





THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he might have paved the whole street, and a little alley besides, with silver money. But he didn't do it—he knew better how to use his money than that: if he laid out a penny, he got half a crown in return, such a clever man of business was he — and then he died.

His son got all the money, and he led a merry life; he used to go to masquerades every night, made kites of bank notes, and played ducks and drakes with gold coins instead of stones. In this way the money soon went. At last he had only a penny left, and no clothes except an old dressing-gown and a pair of slippers. His friends cared for him no longer; they couldn't walk about the streets with him; but one of them who was kind sent him an old trunk, and said, "Pack up." Now this was all very well, but he had nothing to pack, so he got into the trunk himself.

It was a most peculiar trunk. If you pressed the lock the trunk could fly; and this is what happened: with a whiz

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it flew up the chimney, high above the clouds, further and further away. The bottom of it cracked ominously, and he was dreadfully afraid it would go to pieces, and a nice fall he would have had! Heaven preserve us! At last he arrived in the country of the Turks. He hid the trunk in a wood under the dead leaves, and walked into the town; he could easily do that, as all the Turks wear dressing-gowns and slippers, you know, just like his. He met a nurse with a baby. "I say, you Turkish nurse," said he, "what is that big palace close to the town, where all the windows are so high up?"

"That's where the king's daughter lives," said she; "it has been prophesied that she will be made very unhappy by a lover, so no one is allowed to visit her except when the king and the queen go with them."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son, and then he went back to the wood and got into his trunk again, and flew on to the roof of the palace, from whence he crept in at the princess's window.

She was lying on a sofa, fast asleep. She was so very beautiful that the merchant's son was driven to kiss her. She woke up and was dreadfully frightened, but he said that he was the Prophet of the Turks and he had flown down through the air to see her, and this pleased her very much.

They sat side by side and he told her stories about her eyes; he said they were like the most beautiful deep, dark lakes, in which her thoughts floated like mermaids; and then he told her about her forehead, that it was like a snow mountain, adorned with a series of pictures. And he told her all about the storks, which bring beautiful little children up out of the rivers. No end of beautiful stories he told her, and then he asked her to marry him, and she at once said "Yes." "But you must come here on Saturday," she said, "when the King and the Queen drink tea with me. They will be very proud when they hear I am to marry a prophet; but mind you have a splendid story to tell them, for my parents are very fond of



And he told her all about the storks, which bring beautiful children
up out of the river

THE FLYING TRUNK

stories: my mother likes them to be grand and very proper, but my father likes them to be merry, so that he can laugh at them."

"Well, a story will be my only wedding-gift!" he said, and then they separated: but the princess gave him a sword encrusted with gold. It was the kind of present he needed badly.

He flew away and bought himself a new dressing-gown, and sat down in the wood to make up a new story; it had to be ready by Saturday, and it is not always so easy to make up a story.

However, he had it ready in time, and Saturday came.

The king, the queen and the whole court were waiting for him round the princess's tea-table. He had a charming reception.

"Now will you tell us a story," said the Queen, "one which is both thoughtful and instructive."

"But one that we can laugh at too," said the King.

"All right!" said he, and then he began. We must listen to his story attentively.

"There was once a bundle of matches, and they were frightfully proud because of their high origin. Their family tree, that is to say the great pine tree of which they were each a little splinter, had been the giant of the forest. The matches now lay on a shelf between a tinderbox and an old iron pot, and they told the whole story of their youth to these two. 'Ah, when we were a living tree,' said they, 'we were indeed a green branch! Every morning and every evening we had diamond-tea, that was the dew-drops. In the day we had the sunshine, and all the little birds to tell us stories. We could see, too, that we were very rich, for most of the other trees were only clad in summer, but our family could afford to have green clothes both summer and winter. But then the wood-cutters came, and there was a great revolution, and our family was sundered. The head of the tribe got a place

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as mainmast on a splendid ship, which could sail round the world if it chose; the other branches were scattered in different directions, and it is now our task to give light to the common herd; that is how such aristocratic people as ourselves have got into this kitchen.'

"Now my lot has been different!' said the iron pot, beside which the matches lay. 'Ever since I came into the world I have passed the time in being scoured and boiled, over and over again! Everything solid comes to me, and in fact I am the most important person in the house. My pleasure is, when the dinner is over, to lie clean and bright on the shelf, and to have a sensible chat with my companions; but with the exception of the water-bucket, which sometimes goes down into the yard, we lead an indoor life. Our only newsmonger is the market-basket, and it talks very wildly about the Government and the People. Why, the other day an old pot was so alarmed by the conversation, that it fell down and broke itself to pieces! It was a Liberal, you see!'

"You are talking too much,' said the tinderbox, and the steel struck sparks on the flint. 'Let us have a merry evening.'

"Yes, pray let us settle which is the most aristocratic among us,' said the matches.

"No, I don't like talking about myself,' said the earthen pipkin; 'let us have an evening entertainment! I will begin. I will tell you the kind of things we have all experienced; they are quite easy to understand, and that is what we all like: By the eastern sea and Danish beeches ——'

"That's a nice beginning to make!' said all the plates; 'I am sure that will be a story I shall like!'

"Well, I passed my youth there, in a very quiet family; the furniture was beeswaxed, the floors washed, and clean curtains were put up once a fortnight!'

"What a good story-teller you are,' said the broom; 'one can tell directly that it's a woman telling a story; a vein of cleanliness runs through it!'



“I saw the prophet myself . . . his eyes were like shining stars,
and his beard like foaming water”

THE FLYING TRUNK

“‘Yes, one feels that,’ said the water-pail, and for very joy it gave a little hop which clashed on the floor.

“The pipkin went on with its story, and the end was much the same as the beginning.

“All the plates clattered with joy, and the broom crowned the pipkin with a wreath of parsley, because it knew it would annoy the others; and it thought, ‘If I crown her to-day, she will crown me to-morrow.’

“‘Now I will dance,’ said the tongs, and began to dance; heaven help us, what a way into the air she could get her leg. The old chair-cover in the corner burst when she saw it! ‘Mayn’t I be crowned too?’ said the tongs, so they crowned her.

“‘They’re only a rabble after all,’ said the matches.

“The tea-urn was called upon to sing now, but it had a cold, it said; it couldn’t sing except when it was boiling; but that was all because it was stuck-up; it *wouldn’t* sing except when it was on the drawing-room table.

“There was an old quill pen, along on the window-sill, which the servant used to write with; there was nothing extraordinary about it, except that it had been dipped too far into the inkpot, but it was rather proud of that. ‘If the tea-urn won’t sing, it can leave it alone,’ it said. ‘There is a night-ingle hanging outside in a cage, it can sing; it certainly hasn’t learnt anything special, but we needn’t mind that to-night.’

“‘I think it is most unsuitable,’ said the kettle, which was the kitchen songster, and half-sister of the urn, ‘that a strange bird like that should be listened to! Is it patriotic? I will let the market-basket judge.’

“‘I am very much annoyed,’ said the market-basket. ‘I am more annoyed than any one can tell! Is this a suitable way to spend an evening? Wouldn’t it be better to put the house to rights? Then everything would find its proper place, and I would manage the whole party. Then we should get on differently!’

“‘Yes, let us make a row!’ they all said together.

ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

"At that moment the door opened, it was the servant, and they all stood still, nobody uttered a sound. But not a pot among them which didn't know its capabilities, or how distinguished it was, 'If *I* had chosen, we might have had a merry evening, and no mistake,' they all thought.

"The servant took the matches and struck a light; preserve us! how they spluttered and blazed up.

"'Now every one can see,' they thought, 'that we are the first. How brilliantly we shine! What a light we shed around!' — And then they were burnt out."

"That was a splendid story," said the Queen; "I quite felt that I was in the kitchen with the matches. Yes, indeed, you shall marry our daughter."

"Certainly!" said the King. "Thou shalt marry her on Monday!" They said "du" (thou) to him now, as they were to be related.

So the wedding was decided upon, and the evening before the town was illuminated. Buns and cakes were scattered broadcast; the street boys stood on tiptoe and shouted hurrah, and whistled through their fingers. Everything was most gorgeous.

"I suppose I shall have to do something, too," said the merchant's son; so he bought a lot of rockets, squibs, and all sorts of fireworks, put them in his trunk, and flew up into the air with them.

All the Turks jumped at the sight, so that their slippers flew up into the air; they had never seen a flight of meteors like that before. They saw now without doubt that it was the prophet himself, who was about to marry the princess.

As soon as the merchant's son got down again into the wood with his trunk, he thought, "I will just go into the town to hear what was thought of the display," and it was quite reasonable that he should do so.

Oh, how every one talked! Every single man he spoke to had his own opinion about it, but that it had been splendid was the universal opinion.

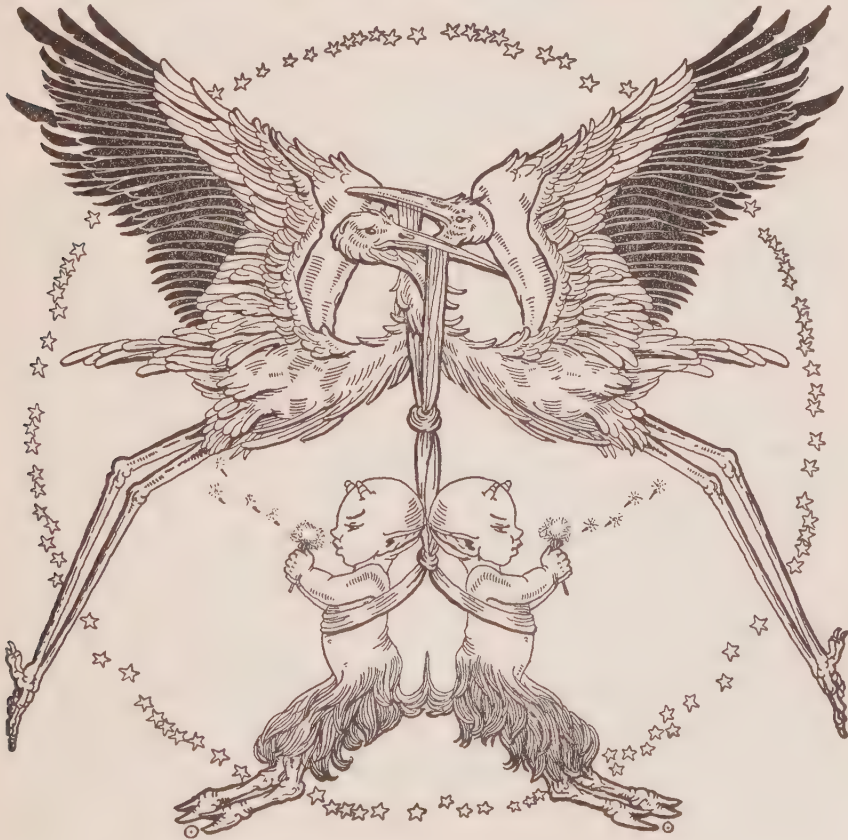


She stood all day on the roof waiting for him; she is waiting for him still, but he wanders around the world telling stories

THE FLYING TRUNK

"I saw the prophet myself," said one; "his eyes were like shining stars, and his beard like foaming water."

"He was wrapped in a mantle of fire," said another. "The most beautiful angels' heads peeped out among the folds." He heard nothing but pleasant things, and the next day was to be his wedding day. He went back to the wood to get into his trunk — but where was it? The trunk was burnt up. A spark from the fireworks had set fire to it and the trunk was burnt to ashes. He could not fly any more, or reach his bride. She stood all day on the roof waiting for him; she is waiting for him still, but he wanders round the world telling stories, only **they** are no longer so merry as the one he told about the matches.





THERE was once a little girl; she was a tiny, delicate little thing, but she always had to go about barefoot in the summer, because she was very poor. In winter she only had a pair of heavy wooden shoes, and her ankles were terribly chafed.

An old mother shoemaker lived in the middle of the village, and she made a pair of little shoes out of some strips of red cloth. They were very clumsy, but they were made with the best intention, for the little girl was to have them. Her name was Karen.

These shoes were given to her, and she wore them for the first time on the day her mother was buried; they were certainly not mourning, but she had no others, and so she walked bare-legged in them behind the poor deal coffin.

Just then a big old carriage drove by, and a big old lady was seated in it; she looked at the little girl, and felt very, very sorry for her, and said to the parson, "Give the little girl to me and I will look after her and be kind to her." Karen



She wanted to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter
wormwood grew

THE RED SHOES

thought it was all because of the red shoes, but the old lady said they were hideous, and they were burnt. Karen was well and neatly dressed, and had to learn reading and sewing. People said she was pretty, but her mirror said, "You are more than pretty, you are lovely."

At this time the Queen was taking a journey through the country, and she had her little daughter the Princess with her. The people, and among them Karen, crowded round the palace where they were staying, to see them. The little Princess stood at a window to show herself. She wore neither a train nor a golden crown, but she was dressed all in white with a beautiful pair of red morocco shoes. They were indeed a contrast to those the poor old mother shoemaker had made for Karen. Nothing in the world could be compared to these red shoes.

The time came when Karen was old enough to be confirmed; she had new clothes, and she was also to have a pair of new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town was to take the measure of her little foot; his shop was full of glass cases of the most charming shoes and shiny leather boots. They looked beautiful, but the old lady could not see very well, so it gave her no pleasure to look at them. Among all the other shoes there was one pair of red shoes like those worn by the Princess; oh, how pretty they were. The shoemaker told them that they had been made for an earl's daughter, but they had not fitted. "I suppose they are patent leather," said the old lady, "they are so shiny."

"Yes, they do shine," said Karen, who tried them on. They fitted and were bought; but the old lady had not the least idea that they were red, or she would never have allowed Karen to wear them for her Confirmation. This she did, however.

Everybody looked at her feet, and when she walked up the church to the chancel, she thought that even the old pictures, those portraits of dead and gone priests and their wives, with stiff collars and long black clothes, fixed their eyes upon her

ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

shoes. She thought of nothing else when the priest laid his hand upon her head and spoke to her of holy baptism, the covenant with God, and that from henceforth she was to be a responsible Christian person. The solemn notes of the organ resounded, the children sang with their sweet voices, the old precentor sang, but Karen only thought about her red shoes.

By the afternoon the old lady had been told on all sides that the shoes were red, and she said it was very naughty and most improper. For the future whenever Karen went to the church, she was to wear black shoes, even if they were old. Next Sunday there was Holy Communion, and Karen was to receive it for the first time. She looked at the black shoes and then at the red ones — then she looked again at the red, and at last put them on.

It was beautiful, sunny weather; Karen and the old lady went by the path through the cornfield, and it was rather dusty. By the church door stood an old soldier, with a crutch; he had a curious long beard, it was more red than white, in fact it was almost quite red. He bent down to the ground and asked the old lady if he might dust her shoes. Karen put out her little foot too. "See what beautiful dancing shoes!" said the soldier. "Mind you stick fast when you dance," and as he spoke he struck the soles with his hand. The old lady gave the soldier a copper and went into the church with Karen. All the people in the church looked at Karen's red shoes, and all the portraits looked too. When Karen knelt at the altar rails and the chalice was put to her lips, she only thought of the red shoes; she seemed to see them floating before her eyes. She forgot to join in the hymn of praise, and she forgot to say the Lord's Prayer.

Now everybody left the church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen lifted her foot to get in after her, but just then the old soldier, who was still standing there, said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!" Karen couldn't help it; she took a few dancing steps, and when she began her feet



“You can’t know who I am? I chop the bad people’s heads off,
and I see that my axe is quivering”

THE RED SHOES

continued to dance; it was just as if the shoes had a power over them. She danced right round the church; she couldn't stop; the coachman had to run after her and take hold of her, and lift her into the carriage; but her feet continued to dance so that she kicked the poor lady horribly. At last they got the shoes off, and her feet had a little rest.

When they got home the shoes were put away in a cupboard, but Karen could not help going to look at them.

The old lady became very ill; they said she could not live; she had to be carefully nursed and tended, and no one was nearer than Karen to do this. But there was to be a grand ball in the town and Karen was invited. She looked at the old lady, who after all could not live; she looked at the red shoes; she thought there was no harm in doing so. She put on the red shoes, even that she might do; but then she went to the ball and began to dance! The shoes would not let her do what she liked: when she wanted to go to the right, they danced to the left; when she wanted to dance up the room, the shoes danced down the room, then down the stairs, through the streets and out of the town gate. Away she danced, and away she had to dance, right away into the dark forest. Something shone up above the trees and she thought it was the moon, for it was a face; but it was the old soldier with the red beard, and he nodded and said, "See what pretty dancing shoes!"

This frightened her terribly and she wanted to throw off the red shoes, but they stuck fast. She tore off her stockings, but the shoes had grown fast to her feet, and off she danced, and off she had to dance over fields and meadows, in rain and sunshine, by day and by night, but at night it was fearful.

She danced into the open churchyard, but the dead did not join her dance, they had something much better to do. She wanted to sit down on a pauper's grave where the bitter wormwood grew, but there was no rest nor repose for her. When she danced toward the open church door she saw an angel standing there in long white robes and wings which

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reached from his shoulders to the ground; his face was grave and stern, and in his hand he held a broad and shining sword.

"Dance you shall!" said he; "you shall dance in your red shoes till you are pale and cold; till your skin shrivels up and you are a skeleton! You shall dance from door to door, and wherever you find proud, vain children, you must knock at the door so that they may see you and fear you. Yea, you shall dance ——"

"Mercy!" shrieked Karen, but she did not hear the angel's answer, for the shoes bore her through the gate into the fields, over roadways and paths, ever and ever she was forced to dance.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well; she heard the sound of a hymn from within, and a coffin covered with flowers was being carried out. Then she knew that the old lady was dead, and it seemed to her that she was forsaken by all the world, and cursed by the holy angels of God.

On and ever on she danced; dance she must even through the dark nights. The shoes bore her away over briars and stubble till her feet were torn and bleeding; she danced away over the heath till she came to a little lonely house. She knew the executioner lived here, and she tapped with her fingers on the window pane and said:

"Come out! come out! I can't come in, for I am dancing!"

The executioner said, "You can't know who I am? I chop the bad people's heads off, and I see that my axe is quivering."

"Don't chop my head off," said Karen, "for then I can never repent of my sins, but pray, pray chop my feet off with the red shoes!"

Then she confessed all her sins, and the executioner chopped off her feet with the red shoes, but the shoes danced right away with the little feet into the depths of the forest.

Then he made her a pair of wooden legs and crutches, and he taught her a psalm, the one penitents always sing; and she kissed the hand which had wielded the axe, and went away over the heath.



Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven and no one there asked
about the red shoes

THE RED SHOES

“I have suffered enough for those red shoes!” said she. “I will go to church now, so that they may see me!” and she went as fast as she could to the church door. When she got there, the red shoes danced up in front of her, and she was frightened and went home again.

She was very sad all the week, and shed many bitter tears, but when Sunday came she said, ‘Now, then, I have suffered and struggled long enough; I should think I am quite as good as many who sit holding their heads so high in church!’ She went along quite boldly, but she did not get farther than the gate before she saw the red shoes dancing in front of her; she was more frightened than ever, and turned back, this time with real repentance in her heart. Then she went to the parson’s house, and begged to be taken into service; she would be very industrious and work as hard as she could; she didn’t care what wages they gave her, if only she might have a roof over her head and live among kind people. The parson’s wife was sorry for her, and took her into her service; she proved to be very industrious and thoughtful. She sat very still, and listened most attentively in the evening when the parson read the Bible. All the little ones were very fond of her, but when they chattered about finery and dress, and about being as beautiful as a queen, she would shake her head.

Next Sunday they all went to church, and they asked her if she would go with them; but she looked sadly, with tears in her eyes, at her crutches, and they went without her to hear the word of God, and she sat in her little room alone. It was only big enough for a bed and a chair; she sat there with her prayer book in her hand, and as she read it with a humble mind, she heard the notes of the organ, borne from the church by the wind; she raised her tear-stained face and said, “O God! help me!”

Then the sun shone brightly round her, and the angel in the white robes whom she had seen on yonder night, at the church door, stood before her. He no longer held the sharp

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sword in his hand, but a beautiful green branch, covered with roses. He touched the ceiling with it and it rose to a great height, and wherever he touched it a golden star appeared. Then he touched the walls and they spread themselves out, and she saw and heard the organ. She saw the pictures of the old parsons and their wives; the congregation were all sitting in their seats singing aloud — for the church itself had come home to the poor girl, in her narrow little chamber, or else she had been taken to it. She found herself on the bench with the other people from the parsonage. And when the hymn had come to an end they looked up and nodded to her and said, "It was a good thing you came after all, little Karen!"

"It was through God's mercy!" she said. The organ sounded, and the children's voices echoed so sweetly through the choir. The warm sunshine streamed brightly in through the window, right up to the bench where Karen sat; her heart was so over-filled with the sunshine, with peace and with joy that it broke. Her soul flew with the sunshine to heaven and no one there asked about the red shoes.





THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LAF

I DARESAY you have heard of the girl who stepped on a loaf, so as not to soil her shoes, and all the misfortunes that befell her in consequence. At any rate the story has been written and printed, too.

She was a poor child, of a proud and arrogant nature, and her disposition was bad from the beginning. When she was quite tiny, her greatest delight was to catch flies and pull their wings off, to make creeping insects of them. Then she would catch chafers and beetles and stick them on a pin, after which she would push a leaf or a bit of paper close enough for them to seize with their feet; for the pleasure of seeing them writhe and wriggle in their efforts to free themselves from the pins.

"The chafer is reading now," said little Inger; "look at it turning over the page!"

She got worse rather than better as she grew older; but she was very pretty, and that no doubt was her misfortune, or she might have had many a beating which she never got.

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"It will take a heavy blow to bend that head," said her own mother. "As a child you have often trampled on my apron; I fear when you are grown up you will trample on my heart!"

This she did with a vengeance.

She was sent into service in the country with some rich people. They treated her as if she had been their own child, and dressed her in the same style. She grew prettier and prettier, but her pride grew, too.

When she had been with them a year, her employers said to her, "You ought to go home to see your parents, little Inger!"

So she went, but she went to show herself only, so that they might see how grand she was. When she got to the town gates, and saw the young men and maids gossiping round the pond, and her mother sitting among them with a bundle of sticks she had picked up in the woods, Inger turned away. She was ashamed that one so fine as herself should have such a ragged old woman, who picked up sticks, for her mother. She was not a bit sorry that she had turned back, only angry.

Another half year passed.

"Little Inger, you really ought to go and see your old parents," said her mistress. "Here is a large loaf of wheaten bread you may take to them. They will be pleased to see you."

Inger put on all her best clothes, and her fine new shoes; she held up her skirts and picked her steps carefully so as to keep her shoes nice and clean. Now no one could blame her for this; but when she came to the path through the marsh a great part of it was wet and muddy, and she threw the loaf into the mud for a stepping-stone, to get over with dry shoes. As she stood there with one foot on the loaf and was lifting up the other for the next step, the loaf sank deeper and deeper with her till she entirely disappeared. Nothing was to be seen but a black bubbling pool.

Now this is the story.

THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF

But what had become of her? She went down to the Marsh-wife, who has a brewery down there. The Marsh-wife is own sister to the Elf-king, and aunt to the Elf-maidens, who are well enough known. They have had verses written about them and pictures painted; but all that people know about the Marsh-wife is that when the mist rises over the meadows in the summer she is at her brewing. It was into this brewery that little Inger fell, and no one can stand being there long. A scavenger's cart is sweet compared to the Marsh-wife's brewery. The smell from the barrels is enough to turn people faint, and the barrels are so close together that no one can pass between them, but wherever there is a little chink it is filled up with noisome toads and slimy snakes. Little Inger fell among all this horrid living filth; it was so icy cold that she shuddered from head to foot, and her limbs grew quite stiff. The loaf stuck fast to her feet and it drew her down just as an amber button draws a bit of straw.

The Marsh-wife was at home. Old Bogey and his great-grandmother were paying her a visit. The great-grandmother is a very venomous old woman, and she is never idle. She never goes out without her work, and she had it with her to-day, too. She was busily making gad-about leather to put into people's shoes, so that the wearer might have no rest. She embroidered lies, and strung together all the idle words which fell to the ground, to make mischief of them. Oh, yes, old great-grandmother can knit and embroider in fine style.

As soon as she saw little Inger, she put up her eyeglass and looked at her through it. "That girl has got something in her," she said; "I should like to have her as a remembrance of my visit. She would make a very good statue in my great-grandson's outer corridor."

So Inger was given to her and this was how she got to Bogey-land. People don't always get there by such a direct route, though it is easy enough to get there in more round-about ways.

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What a never-ending corridor that was to be sure; it made one giddy to look either backward or forward. Here stood an ignominious crew waiting for the door of mercy to be opened, but long might they wait. Great, fat, sprawling spiders spun webs of a thousand years round and round their feet; and these webs were like footscrews and held them as in a vise, or as though bound with a copper chain. Besides, there was such everlasting unrest in every soul; the unrest of torment. The miser had forgotten the key of his money chest, he knew he had left it sticking in the lock. But it would take far too long to enumerate all the various tortures here. Inger experienced the torture of standing like a statue with a loaf tied to her feet.

"This is what comes of trying to keep one's feet clean!" said she to herself. "Look how they stare at me." They did indeed stare at her; all their evil passions shone out of their eyes and spoke without words from their lips. They were a terrible sight. "It must be a pleasure to look at me!" thought Inger, "for I have a pretty face and nice clothes," and then she turned her eyes to look at them — her neck was too stiff. But, oh, how dirty she had got in the Marsh-wife's brewery; she had never thought of that. Her clothes were covered with slime, a snake had got among her hair, and hung dangling down her back. A toad looked out of every fold in her dress, croaking like an asthmatic pug dog. It was most unpleasant. "But all the others down here look frightful, too," was her consolation.

Worse than anything was the terrible hunger she felt, and she could not stoop down to break a bit of bread off the loaf she was standing on. No; her back had stiffened, her arms and hands had stiffened, and her whole body was like a pillar of stone. She could only turn her eyes, but she could turn them right round, so as to look backward; and a horrid sight it was. And then came the flies: they crept upon her eyes, and however much she winked they would not fly away; they could



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THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF

not, for she had pulled off their wings and made creeping insects of them. That was indeed a torment added to her gnawing hunger; she seemed at last to be absolutely empty.

"If this is to go on long I shan't be able to bear it," said she; but it did go on, and bear it she must.

Then a scalding tear fell upon her forehead, it trickled over her face and bosom right down to the loaf; then another fell, and another, till there was a perfect shower.

Who was crying for little Inger! Had she not a mother on earth? Tears of sorrow shed by a mother for her child will always reach it; but they do not bring healing, they burn and make the torment fifty times worse. Then this terrible hunger again, and she not able to get at the bread under her feet. She felt at last as if she had been feeding upon herself, and had become a mere hollow reed which conducts every sound. She distinctly heard everything that was said on earth about herself, and she heard nothing but hard words.

Certainly her mother wept bitterly and sorrowfully, but at the same time she said, "Pride goes before a fall! There was your misfortune, Inger! How you have grieved your mother."

Her mother and every one on earth knew all about her sin, how she had stepped upon the loaf, and sunk down under the earth, and so was lost. The cowherd had told them so much; he had seen it himself from the hillock where he was standing.

"How you have grieved your mother, Inger," said the poor woman. "But then I always said you would!"

"Oh, that I had never been born!" thought Inger then. "I should have been much better off. My mother's tears are no good now."

She heard the good people, her employers, who had been like parents to her, talking about her. "She was a sinful child," they said. "She did not value the gifts of God, but trod them under foot. She will find it hard to open the door of mercy."

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"They ought to have brought me up better!" thought Inger; "they should have knocked the nonsense out of me if it was there."

She heard that a song had been written about her and sung all over the country, "The arrogant girl who trod on a loaf to keep her shoes clean."

"That I should hear that old story so often, and have to suffer so much for it!" thought Inger.

"The others ought to be punished for their sins, too," said Inger; "there would be plenty to punish. Oh, how I am being tormented!"

And her heart grew harder than her outer shell.

"Nobody will ever get any better in this company! and I won't be any better. Look how they are all staring at me!"

Her heart was full of anger and malice toward everybody.

"Now they have got something to talk about up there! Oh, this torture!"

She heard people telling her story to children, and the little ones always called her "wicked Inger" — "she was so naughty that she had to be tormented." She heard nothing but hard words from the children's mouths.

But one day when anger and hunger were gnawing at her hollow shell, she heard her name mentioned, and her story being told to an innocent child, a little girl, and the little creature burst into tears at the story of proud, vain Inger.

"But will she never come up here again?" asked the child, and the answer was, "She will never come up again."

"But if she was to ask pardon, and promise never to do it again!"

"She won't ask pardon," they said.

"But I want her to do it," said the little girl, who refused to be comforted. "I will give my doll's house if she may only come up again; it is so dreadful for poor Inger."

These words reached down into Inger's heart, and they seemed to do her good. It was the first time that any one

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said "Poor Inger," without adding anything about her misdeeds. A little innocent child was weeping and praying for her, and it made her feel quite odd: she would have liked to cry herself, but she could not shed a tear, and this was a further torment.

As the years passed above, so they went on below without any change: she seldomer heard sounds from above, and she was less talked about. But one day she was aware of a sigh. "Inger, Inger, what a grief you have been to me, but I always knew you would." It was her mother, who was dying. Occasionally she heard her name mentioned by her old employers, and the gentlest words her mistress used were, "Shall I ever see you again, Inger? One never knows whither one may go!"

But Inger knew very well that her good, kindly mistress could never come to the place where she was.

Again a long bitter period passed. Then Inger again heard her name pronounced, and saw above her head what seemed to be two bright stars; they were in fact two kind eyes which were closing on earth. So many years had gone by since the little girl had cried so bitterly at the story of "Poor Inger," that the child had grown to be an old woman whom the Lord was now calling to Himself. In the last hour when one's whole life comes back to one, she remembered how as a little child she had wept bitter tears at the story of Inger. The impression was so clear to the old woman, in the hour of death, that she exclaimed aloud, "O Lord, may I not, like Inger, have trodden on Thy blessed gifts without thinking; and may I not also have nourished pride in my heart, but in Thy mercy Thou didst not let me fall! Forsake me not now in my last hour!"

The old woman's eyes closed, and the eyes of her soul were opened to see the hidden things, and as Inger had been so vividly present in her last thoughts she saw now how deep she had sank; and at the sight she burst into tears. Then she stood in the Kingdom of Heaven, as a child, weeping for poor

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Inger. Her tears and prayers echoed into the hollow, empty shell which surrounded the imprisoned, tortured soul, and it was quite overwhelmed by all this unexpected love from above. An angel of God weeping over her! Why was this vouchsafed to her? The tortured soul recalled every earthly action it had ever performed, and at last it melted into tears, in a way Inger had never done. She was filled with grief for herself; it seemed as though the gate of mercy could never be opened to her. But as in humble contrition she acknowledged this, a ray of light shone into the gulf of destruction. The strength of the ray was far greater than that of the sunbeam which melts the snow-man built up by the boys in the garden; and sooner, much sooner, than a snowflake melts on the warm lips of a child, did Inger's stony form dissolve before it, and a little bird with lightning speed winged its way to the upper world. It was terribly shy and afraid of everything. It was ashamed of itself and afraid to meet the eye of any living being, so it hastily sought shelter in a chink in the wall. There it cowered, shuddering in every limb; it could not utter a sound, for it had no voice. It sat for a long time before it could survey calmly all the wonders around. Yes, they were wonders indeed, the air was so sweet and fresh, the moon shown so brightly, the trees and bushes were so fragrant; and then the comfort of it all, its feathers were so clean and dainty. How all creation spoke of love and beauty! The bird would gladly have sung aloud all these thoughts stirring in its breast, but it had not the power. Gladly would it have carolled as do the cuckoos and nightingales in summer. The good God who hears the voiceless hymn of praise even of a worm, was also aware of this psalm of thanksgiving trembling in the breast of the bird, as the psalms of David echoed in his heart before they shaped themselves into words and melody. These thoughts, and these voiceless songs grew, and swelled for weeks; they must have an outlet, and at the first attempt at a good deed this would be found.

THE GIRL WHO TROD ON A LOAF

Then came the holy Christmas Feast. The peasants raised a pole against a wall, and tied a sheaf of oats on to the top, so that the little birds might have a good meal on the happy Christmas day.

The sun rose bright and shone upon the sheaf of oats, and the twittering birds surrounded the pole. Then from the chink in the wall came a feeble tweet-tweet; the swelling thoughts of the bird had found a voice, and this faint twitter was its hymn of praise. The thought of a good deed was awakened, and the bird flew out of its hiding place; in the Kingdom of Heaven this bird was well known.

It was a very hard winter, and all the water had thick ice over it. The birds and wild creatures had great difficulty in finding food. The little bird flew along the highways finding here and there in the tracks of the sledges a grain of corn. At the baiting places it also found a few morsels of bread, of which it would only eat a crumb, and gave the rest to the other starving sparrows which it called up. Then it flew into the towns and peeped about. Wherever a loving hand had strewn bread crumbs for the birds, it only ate one crumb and gave the rest away.

In the course of the winter the bird had collected and given away so many crumbs of bread that they equalled in weight the whole loaf which little Inger had stepped upon to keep her shoes clean. When the last crumbs were found and given away, the bird's gray wings became white and spread themselves wide.

"A tern is flying away over the sea," said the children who saw the white bird. Now it dived into the sea, and now it soared up into the bright sunshine. It gleamed so brightly that it was not possible to see what became of it; they said it flew right into the sun.



IN CHINA, as you know, the emperor is a Chinaman, and all the people around him are Chinamen too. It is many years since the story I am going to tell you happened, but that is all the more reason for telling it, lest it should be forgotten. The emperor's palace was the most beautiful thing in the world; it was made entirely of the finest porcelain, very costly, but at the same time so fragile that it could only be touched with the very greatest care. There were the most extraordinary flowers to be seen in the garden; the most beautiful ones had little silver bells tied to them, which tinkled perpetually, so that one should not pass the flowers without looking at them. Every little detail in the garden had been most carefully thought out, and it was so big that even the gardener himself did not know where it ended. If one went on walking, one came to beautiful woods with lofty trees and deep lakes. The wood extended to the sea, which was deep and blue, deep enough for large ships to sail up right under the branches of the trees. Among these trees lived a nightingale

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which sang so deliciously that even the poor fisherman, who had plenty of other things to do, lay still to listen to it, when he was out at night drawing in his nets. "Heavens, how beautiful it is!" he said, but then he had to attend to his business and forgot it. The next night when he heard it again he would again exclaim, "Heavens, how beautiful it is!"

Travellers came to the emperor's capital, from every country in the world; they admired everything very much, especially the palace and the gardens, but when they heard the nightingale they all said, "This is better than anything!"

When they got home they described it, and the learned ones wrote many books about the town, the palace and the garden, but nobody forgot the nightingale, it was always put above everything else. Those among them who were poets wrote the most beautiful poems, all about the nightingale in the woods by the deep blue sea. These books went all over the world, and in course of time some of them reached the emperor. He sat in his golden chair reading and reading, and nodding his head, well pleased to hear such beautiful descriptions of the town, the palace and the garden. "But the nightingale is the best of all," he read.

"What is this?" said the emperor. "The nightingale? Why, I know nothing about it. Is there such a bird in my kingdom, and in my own garden into the bargain, and I have never heard it! Imagine my having to discover this from a book!"

Then he called his gentleman-in-waiting, who was so grand that when any one of a lower rank dared to speak to him, or to ask him a question, he could only answer "P," which means nothing at all.

"There is said to be a very wonderful bird called a nightingale here," said the emperor. "They say that it is better than anything else in all my great kingdom! Why have I never been told anything about it?"

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"I have never heard it mentioned," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "It has been never presented at court."

"I wish it to appear here this evening to sing to me," said the emperor. "The whole world knows what I am possessed of, and I know nothing about it!"

"I have never heard it mentioned before," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I will seek it, and I will find it!" But where was it to be found? The gentleman-in-waiting ran upstairs and downstairs and in and out of all the rooms and corridors. No one of all those he met had ever heard anything about the nightingale; so the gentleman-in-waiting ran back to the emperor, and said that it must be a myth, invented by the writers of the books. "Your imperial majesty must not believe everything that is written; books are often mere inventions, even if they do not belong to what we call the black art!"

"But the book in which I read it is sent to me by the powerful Emperor of Japan, so it can't be untrue. I will hear this nightingale, I insist upon its being here to-night. I extend my most gracious protection to it, and if it is not forthcoming I will have the whole court trampled upon after supper!"

"Tsing-pe!" said the gentleman-in-waiting, and away he ran again, up and down all the stairs, in and out of all the rooms and corridors; half the court ran with him, for they none of them wished to be trampled on. There was much questioning about the nightingale, which was known to all the outside world, but to no one at court. At last they found a poor little maid in the kitchen. She said, "Oh, heavens, the nightingale? I know it very well. Yes, indeed, it can sing. Every evening I am allowed to take broken meat to my poor sick mother: she lives down by the shore. On my way back, when I am tired, I rest awhile in the wood, and then I hear the nightingale. Its song brings the tears into my eyes. I feel as if my mother were kissing me!"

"Little kitchen-maid," said the gentleman-in-waiting, "I

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will procure you a permanent position in the kitchen and permission to see the emperor dining, if you will take us to the nightingale. It is commanded to appear at court to-night."

Then they all went out into the wood where the nightingale usually sang. Half the court was there. As they were going along at their best pace a cow began to bellow.

"Oh!" said a young courtier, "there we have it. What wonderful power for such a little creature; I have certainly heard it before."

"No, those are the cows bellowing; we are a long way yet from the place." Then the frogs began to croak in the marsh.

"Beautiful!" said the Chinese chaplain; "it is just like the tinkling of church bells."

"No, those are the frogs!" said the little kitchen-maid. "But I think we shall soon hear it now!"

Then the nightingale began to sing.

"There it is!" said the little girl. "Listen, listen, there it sits!" and she pointed to a little gray bird up among the branches.

"Is it possible?" said the gentleman-in-waiting. "I should never have thought it was like that. How common it looks. Seeing so many grand people must have frightened all its colours away."

"Little nightingale!" called the kitchen-maid quite loud, "our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him!"

"With the greatest pleasure!" said the nightingale, warbling away in the most delightful fashion.

"It is just like crystal bells," said the gentleman-in-waiting. "Look at its little throat, how active it is. It is extraordinary that we have never heard it before! I am sure it will be a great success at court!"

"Shall I sing again to the emperor?" said the nightingale, who thought he was present.

"My precious little nightingale," said the gentleman-in-

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waiting. "I have the honour to command your attendance at a court festival to-night, where you will charm his gracious majesty, the emperor, with your fascinating singing."

"It sounds best among the trees," said the nightingale, but it went with them willingly when it heard that the emperor wished it.

The palace had been brightened up for the occasion. The walls and the floors which were all of china shone by the light of many thousand golden lamps. The most beautiful flowers, all of the tinkling kind, were arranged in the corridors; there was hurrying to and fro, and a great draught, but this was just what made the bells ring, one's ears were full of the tinkling. In the middle of the large reception room where the emperor sat, a golden rod had been fixed, on which the nightingale was to perch. The whole court was assembled, and the little kitchen-maid had been permitted to stand behind the door, as she now had the actual title of cook. They were all dressed in their best; everybody's eyes were turned toward the little gray bird at which the emperor was nodding. The nightingale sang delightfully, and the tears came into the emperor's eyes, nay, they rolled down his cheeks, and then the nightingale sang more beautifully than ever, its notes touched all hearts. The emperor was charmed, and said the nightingale should have his gold slipper to wear round its neck. But the nightingale declined with thanks; it had already been sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the eyes of the emperor; that is my richest reward. The tears of an emperor have a wonderful power! God knows I am sufficiently recompensed!" and then it again burst into its sweet heavenly song.

"That is the most delightful coquetting I have ever seen!" said the ladies, and they took some water into their mouths to try and make the same gurgling, when any one spoke to them, thinking so to equal the nightingale. Even the lackeys and the chambermaids announced that they were satisfied, and that is saying a great deal, they are always the most difficult



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people to please. Yes, indeed, the nightingale had made a sensation. It was to stay at court now, and to have its own cage, as well as liberty to walk out twice a day, and once in the night. It always had twelve footmen with each one holding a ribbon which was tied round its leg. There was not much pleasure in an outing of that sort.

The whole town talked about the marvellous bird, and if two people met, one said to the other "Night," and the other answered "Gale," and then they sighed, perfectly understanding each other. Eleven cheesemongers' children were called after it, but they had not got a voice among them.

One day a large parcel came for the emperor; outside was written the word "Nightingale."

"Here we have another new book about this celebrated bird," said the emperor. But it was no book, it was a little work of art in a box, an artificial nightingale, exactly like the living one, but it was studded all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires.

When the bird was wound up, it could sing one of the songs the real one sang, and it wagged its tail which glittered with silver and gold. A ribbon was tied round its neck on which was written, "The Emperor of Japan's nightingale is very poor, compared to the Emperor of China's."

Everybody said, "Oh, how beautiful!" And the person who brought the artificial bird immediately received the title of Imperial Nightingale-Carrier in Chief.

"Now, they must sing together; what a duet that will be."

Then they had to sing together, but they did not get on very well, for the real nightingale sang in its own way, and the artificial one could only sing waltzes.

"There is no fault in that," said the music master; "it is perfectly in time and correct in every way!"

Then the artificial bird had to sing alone. It was just as great a success as the real one, and then it was so much prettier to look at, it glittered like bracelets and breastpins.

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It sang the same tune three and thirty times over, and yet it was not tired; people would willingly have heard it from the beginning again, but the Emperor said that the real one must have a turn now — but where was it? No one had noticed that it had flown out of the open window, back to its own green woods.

“But what is the meaning of this?” said the emperor.

All the courtiers railed at it, and said it was a most ungrateful bird.

“We have got the best bird, though,” said they, and then the artificial bird had to sing again, and this was the thirty-fourth time that they heard the same tune, but they did not know it thoroughly even yet, because it was so difficult.

The music master praised the bird tremendously, and insisted that it was much better than the real nightingale, not only as regarded the outside with all the diamonds but the inside, too.

“Because you see, my ladies and gentleman, and the emperor before all, in the real nightingale you never know what you will hear, but in the artificial one everything is decided beforehand! So it is, and so it must remain, it can't be otherwise. You can account for things, you can open it and show the human ingenuity in arranging the waltzes, how they go, and how one note follows upon another!”

“Those are exactly my opinions,” they all said, and the music master got leave to show the bird to the public next Sunday. They were also to hear it sing, said the emperor. So they heard it, and all became as enthusiastic over it as if they had drunk themselves merry on tea, because that is a thoroughly Chinese habit.

Then they all said “Oh,” and stuck their forefingers in the air and nodded their heads; but the poor fishermen who had heard the real nightingale said, “It sounds very nice, and it is very like the real one, but there is something wanting, we



“Little nightingale!” called the kitchen maid quite loud, “our gracious emperor wishes you to sing to him!”

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don't know what." The real nightingale was banished from the kingdom.

The artificial bird had its place on a silken cushion, close to the emperor's bed: all the presents it had received of gold and precious jewels were scattered round it. Its title had risen to be "Chief Imperial Singer of the bed chamber," in rank number one, on the left side; for the emperor reckoned that side the important one, where the heart was seated. And even an emperor's heart is on the left side. The music master wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird; the treatise was very long, and written in all the most difficult Chinese characters. Everybody said they had read and understood it, for otherwise they would have been reckoned stupid, and then their bodies would have been trampled upon.

Things went on in this way for a whole year. The emperor, the court, and all the other Chinamen knew every little gurgle in the song of the artificial bird by heart; but they liked it all the better for this, and they could all join in the song themselves. Even the street boys sang "zizizi" and "cluck, cluck, cluck," and the emperor sang it, too.

But one evening when the bird was singing its best, and the emperor was lying in bed listening to it, something gave way inside the bird with a "whizz." Then a spring burst, "whirr" went all the wheels and the music stopped. The emperor jumped out of bed and sent for his private physicians, but what good could they do? Then they sent for the watchmaker, and after a good deal of talk and examination, he got the works to go again somehow; but he said it would have to be saved as much as possible, because it was so worn out and he could not renew the works so as to be sure of the tune. This was a great blow! They only dared to let the artificial bird sing once a year, and hardly that; but then the music master made a little speech, using all the most difficult words. He said it was just as good as ever, and his saying it made it so.

Five years now passed, and then a great grief came upon

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the nation, for they were all very fond of their emperor, and he was ill and could not live, it was said. A new emperor was already chosen, and people stood about in the street and asked the gentleman-in-waiting how their emperor was going on.

"P," answered he, shaking his head.

The emperor lay pale and cold in his gorgeous bed, the courtiers thought he was dead, and they all went off to pay their respects to their new emperor. The lackeys ran off to talk matters over, and the chambermaids gave a great coffee party. Cloth had been laid down in all the rooms and corridors so as to deaden the sound of footsteps, so it was very, very quiet. But the emperor was not dead yet. He lay stiff and pale in the gorgeous bed with its velvet hangings and heavy golden tassels. There was an open window high above him, and the moon streamed in upon the emperor, and the artificial bird beside him.

The poor emperor could hardly breathe; he seemed to have a weight on his chest; he opened his eyes, and then he saw that it was Death sitting upon his chest, wearing his golden crown. In one hand he held the emperor's golden sword, and in the other his imperial banner. Round about, from among the folds of the velvet hangings, peered many curious faces; some were hideous, others gentle and pleasant. They were all the emperor's good and bad deeds, which now looked him in the face when Death was weighing him down.

"Do you remember that?" whispered one after the other; "Do you remember this?" and they told him so many things that the perspiration poured down his face.

"I never knew that," said the emperor. "Music, music, sound the great Chinese drums!" he cried, "that I may not hear what they are saying." But they went on and on, and Death sat nodding his head, just like a Chinaman, at everything that was said.

"Music, music!" shrieked the emperor. "You precious little golden bird, sing, sing! I have loaded you with precious

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stones, and even hung my own golden slipper around your neck; sing, I tell you, sing!”

But the bird stood silent; there was nobody to wind it up, so of course it could not go. Death continued to fix the great empty sockets of its eyes upon him, and all was silent, so terribly silent.

Suddenly, close to the window, there was a burst of lovely song; it was the living nightingale, perched on a branch outside. It had heard of the emperor's need, and had come to bring comfort and hope to him. As it sang the faces round became fainter and fainter, and the blood coursed with fresh vigour in the emperor's veins, and through his feeble limbs. Even Death himself listened to the song and said, “Go on, little nightingale, go on!”

“Yes, if you give me the gorgeous golden sword; yes, if you give me the imperial banner; yes, if you give me the emperor's crown.”

And Death gave back each of these treasures for a song, and the nightingale went on singing. It sang about the quiet churchyard, when the roses bloom, where the elder flower scents the air, and where the fresh grass is ever moistened anew by the tears of the mourner. This song brought to Death a longing for his own garden, and like a cold gray mist he passed out of the window.

“Thanks, thanks!” said the emperor; “you heavenly little bird, I know you! I banished you from my kingdom, and yet you have charmed the evil visions away from my bed by your song, and even Death away from my heart! How can I ever repay you?”

“You have rewarded me,” said the nightingale. “I brought the tears to your eyes the very first time I ever sang to you, and I shall never forget it! Those are the jewels which gladden the heart of a singer—but sleep now, and wake up fresh and strong! I will sing to you!”

Then it sang again, and the emperor fell into a sweet re-

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freshing sleep. The sun shone in at his window, when he woke refreshed and well; none of his attendants had yet come back to him, for they thought he was dead, but the nightingale still sat there singing.

"You must always stay with me!" said the emperor. "You shall only sing when you like, and I will break the artificial bird into a thousand pieces!"

"Don't do that!" said the nightingale; "it did all the good it could! Keep it as you have always done! I can't build my nest and live in this palace, but let me come whenever I like, then I will sit on the branch in the evening and sing to you. I will sing to cheer you and to make you thoughtful, too; I will sing to you of the happy ones, and of those that suffer, too. I will sing about the good and the evil, which are kept hidden from you. The little singing bird flies far and wide, to the poor fisherman, and the peasant's home, to numbers who are far from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet there is an odour of sanctity round the crown, too! I will come, and I will sing to you! But you must promise me one thing!"

"Everything!" said the emperor, who stood there in his imperial robes which he had just put on, and he held the sword heavy with gold upon his heart.

"One thing I ask you! Tell no one that you have a little bird who tells you everything; it will be better so!"

Then the nightingale flew away. The attendants came in to see after their dead emperor, and there he stood, bidding them "good-morning!"





THE END.

